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SUBJECT: BABIL TRIBAL SUPPORT COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS ISCI/DAWA DIFFERENCES

REF: A) HILLAH 00075; B) HILLAH 00076

CLASSIFIED BY: Kenneth Hillas, PRT Leader, Babil PRT, Dept of State.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

**¶1.** (SBU) On September 12, the Babil Tribal Support Council held its founding congress at the Artists Hall in al-Hillah. The head of the Prime Minister Maliki's Babil tribal support council initiative, Sheikh Salih Kashif al-Gittah, and the Prime Minister's senior tribal advisor, Dr. Aboot al-Essawi, were both in attendance. There was considerable security in the area and Governor Salim (ISCI) organized a demonstration at the site in opposition, according to several sources. The protest was brief but not violent and did not affect the congress.

**¶2.** (C) According to a senior sheikh, the Governor called all the Provincial Directors General (DG), except for the DG of Education, and threatened to have fired any employee who attended the council meeting. He also called the Director of the Artists Hall and pressured him (unsuccessfully) to cancel the lease of the hall, which had been arranged by Da'wa provincial party leader Ali Jabbur (aka Abu Ahmed al-Basri).

**¶3.** (C) Sheikh Salih Kashif al-Gittah, who is a religious figure but was dressed in sheikh attire, officially opened the congress and reminded the attendees the tribal support council was not a substitute for the central and local governmental authorities. Sheikh Aboot al-Essawi also reminded those present that the tribal peoples who will be engaged the tribal support councils had proven their worth in North Babil, as well as Diyala and most of all al-Anbar. He went on to say that tribes who joined in this process could play a key role in stabilizing security, and that the tribal support council thus offered a better chance for displaced Iraqis to return home. Sheikh Aboot added that although the sheikhs would serve without pay there was a promise that projects and services would be initiated in their villages. The sheikhs in attendance included: Ameer Getran al-Saghier for the Khafaji; Majid al-Hazzah, the head sheikh of the al-Ma'ameran; Ali Abbass of the al-Janabi tribe in Iskanderiyah; Khalil Aboot of the al-Janabi from al-Hillah; Abdullah al-Shimmery of the Shammar Tribe; Fakhri Mansoor al-Khafaji of the Khafaji tribe; Manfi Kareem Abbass of the Jobour (Sunni faction); Magtoof al-Abbass of the al-Abbass tribe in western al-Hillah city; and An al-Shinan of the Tufail tribe.

**¶4.** (C) Comment: The sheiks in attendance represent the the prominent tribes in Babil, Including the al-Joubor (both Sunni and Shiite), the al-Janabi (both factions), the Jehaish (Sunni), the al- Ma'amerah (Shiite though most live in north Babil), the Khafaja (Shiite), the Massoud (Shiite though mostly in northern Babil), the al-Taai (Shiite) and the al-Azzah (Shiite), giving this tribal council a non-sectarian character and added legitimacy. Whether ISCI can be accommodated to this TSC could affect the risk of future violence in the province as provincial elections loom over the horizon. Like the ISCI

leadership in Baghdad, Governor Salim views the provincial tribal council as an effort by Da'wa to extend its influence in the rural areas and make inroads into ISCI's political base.

SIGNATURE